

School in the Woods: the Story of An Immigrant Seminary

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Under Altgeld the Democrats abandoned me-too conservatism and turned toward liberalism. Meanwhile, as farms became more mechanized and some villages disappeared, in the tradition of mobility the surplus manpower went to the cities to compete with the new arrivals from Europe. Chicago especially provided opportunity to rise through the ranks and become entrepreneurs and possibly millionaires.

To Keiser, Chicago is the "ultimate city." Economic lodestone for most of Illinois and a considerable portion of other midwestern states, it differs greatly from the 101 downstate counties but yet it is an integral part of the diversified state. During the course of Keiser's exposition, Chicago became the nation's second largest city and only two states remained more populous than Illinois. For the state and the city, future growth is destined.

This book is Keiser's farewell gift to his home state. A specialist in Illinois and labor history, he would prefer to work full time in describing and interpreting the foundations of civilization. But he has three school age sons and university administrators are paid better than professors. After he became Sangamon State University's vice president for academic affairs, Keiser published two books and continued to write a weekly newspaper series on Illinois history. Now he has gone to Idaho as president of Boise State University.

—Robert P. Howard
Springfield, IL

School in the Woods: The Story of an Immigrant Seminary, by Thorvald Hansen. Askov, Minnesota: American Publishing Company, 1977. Illustrations and index. \$3.75.

Nineteenth century institutions of higher education experienced frightful mortality rates; calculated estimates indicate but one in five becoming permanent enterprises. In the ashes of each of these hundreds of experiments—however minor they may ostensibly appear to be—are to be found vivid testimonies to the hopes, fears, and the follies inherent in the human record. Hansen's book on the ill-fated Danish Lutheran seminary at West Denmark, Wisconsin, in operation from 1887 to 1892, provides an important insight into American religious factionalism as endured by one immigrant group.

Danish American Lutheranism formally split into two synods in 1894 with the more orthodox group uniting with the Blair Church, an earlier peaceful departure from a predominantly Norwegian synod, and the liberals were left in stubborn isolation. This separation has persisted to the present, although both merged in the 1960s with other Lutherans, but again into distinct organizations.

Actually, accounts of the mundane functioning of the seminary, the spiritual/institutional antecedent of Grand View College of Des Moines, occupy somewhat of a minor portion of the book. But those glimpses into the

student-professor world of the 1890s provide some fascinating material and would be of particular interest to the historian with proclivities for the American social and/or educational experience. This section of the monograph is largely based on the author's fortuitous discovery in the Grand View walk-in vault of a daily journal covering four of the school's five years and which was kept by its two principal professors.

However, the major contribution of this work rests on its analysis of the schism in the Danish Church, for the seminary miscarried, not because of its lack of success in performing its mission, but because of the increasingly acrimonious dissension among Danish Lutherans. All of the explicit problems (the seminary, secret societies, conversion after death, Grundtvigianism, literalism, personalities) were symptoms, not the disease: "The fatal blow to both the school . . . and the church itself was dealt by sociological pressures generated by the new world environment." The Church of Denmark had successfully harbored widely diverse factions, but in the United States, the liberals were out of step with both Protestantism and Lutheranism, a factor that elicited ridicule and even allegations of heresy from other Lutherans. The secessionists could not cope with that state of affairs; the liberals would not surrender their freedom.

School in the Woods, then, is much more than a nostalgic narrative and represents a significant—and persuasive—consideration in reconciling the self-destructive tendencies of one immigrant group.

—Stephen Rye
Grand View College

Affairs of State: Public Life in Late Nineteenth Century America, by Morton Keller. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977. pp. xiv, 631. \$17.50.

From literally thousands of sources, Morton Keller has culled information about all aspects of public life in the late nineteenth century. He slights nothing in his overview, examining municipal, county, and state governmental activities as well as the more familiar national political, legislative, and judicial developments. The subjects discussed range from the obvious ones like reconstruction, industrialism, and populism to the obscure—local ordinances on drinking, marriage, and other civil matters. One is frequently struck by the many similarities to current issues: opposition to school consolidation (Vermont had 2,550 public schools and 2,290 school districts in 1884), gun control (several cities enacted "Pistol Bills" to outlaw the sale of certain types of firearms), and concern over foreign land ownership (many states and the federal government passed laws forbidding aliens from purchasing land.)

Along the way, Keller notes some general trends and themes. For ex-

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